

**MINUTES OF THE
IMMIGRATION INTERIM COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, November 12, 2008 – 5:30 p.m. – Gardner Student Center Ballroom, Dixie State College

Members Present:

Sen. Scott K. Jenkins, Senate Chair
Rep. Brad L. Dee, House Chair
Sen. John W. Hickman
Sen. Mark B. Madsen
Rep. Glenn A. Donnelson
Rep. Ben C. Ferry
Rep. Neil A. Hansen
Rep. Michael E. Noel

Members Absent:

Sen. Ross I. Romero
Rep. Stephen D. Clark
Rep. Mark A. Wheatley

Staff Present:

Mr. Arthur L. Hunsaker, Policy Analyst
Mr. James L. Wilson, Associate General Counsel
Mr. Chris Parker, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Chelsea Barrett, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Jenkins called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

Rep. Hansen moved to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2008 meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Chair Dee and Sen. Madsen absent for the vote.

2. E-Verify Presentation

Ms. Gloria Aitken, Management and Program Analyst, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, explained that e-verify provides a means for participating employers to verify the employment eligibility status of newly-hired employees. She presented to the Committee the goals of the e-verify program, which include (1) reducing unauthorized employees (2) minimizing verification-related discrimination (3) providing a quick and non burdensome process for employers, and (4) protecting civil liberties and employee privacy. Ms. Aitken explained how the e-verify system works, and the process an organization must agree upon to be a participant in the program.

The Committee discussed the presentation and requested that Ms. Aitkens host a "webinar" during the Committee's next meeting to further demonstrate the e-verify system.

3. Immigration Perspective: Arizona

Rep. Russell Pearce, Arizona Legislature, explained that as elected officials in this country, it is the duty of state legislators to organize and enforce state laws. Rep. Pearce explained his experiences with working in the Arizona Legislature and its focus on the e-verify system and illegal immigration. He noted that in Arizona, e-verify is used across the state to most effectively cope with illegal immigration.

The Committee discussed the presentation and the implications involving illegal immigration in border verses non-border states.

4. E-Verify

Ms. Barbara Szweda, Public Policy Advocate, ACLU of Utah, explained her experiences and education on immigration law. She expressed concern with the e-verify program, specifically that the privacy of all citizens could be threatened. Ms. Szweda informed the Committee of miscalculations that have resulted with e-verify. She cautioned against the implications involved with a "quick fix" system and encouraged the Committee to have the e-verify system corrected and become well established before it is implemented throughout Utah.

The Committee discussed the presentation.

The Committee took a ten minute break.

5. Immigration: Business Community Perspectives

Mr. Josh Bevans, Chair, St. George Area Chamber of Commerce, explained that in the St. George area, many businesses are supportive of using the e-verify system. Mr. Bevans explained that e-verify only includes those employees recently hired and secondly, that information available on e-verify has been collected and misused by some subscribers. He explained, however, that Washington County would benefit from incorporating the e-verify system into their community of small businesses.

6. Immigration: Impact on the Community

Mr. Larry Meyers, Attorney, noted that he was speaking on behalf of the Citizen's Council on Illegal Immigration and other concerned citizens in Washington County. Mr. Meyers encouraged the Committee to consider the full implementation of 2008 General Session S.B. 81, "Illegal Immigration." He explained that throughout Washington County there are many individuals that feel like this issue is pressing and needs additional support from the Legislature. Mr. Meyers commented on Sen. Hickman's community participation and influence surrounding the issues of illegal immigration.

7. Public Comment

Ms. Georgia Thompson, Utah League of Women Voters, explained the League's official position statements on illegal immigration and distributed to the Committee, "LWVUS Immigration Position."

Mr. Joe Citizen spoke in favor of illegal immigrant control with employers.

Mr. Matt Egler, St. George resident, shared his experiences with illegal immigrants in the St. George area and the importance of diversity in government.

Mr. Randy Green, St. George resident, spoke about his experience with illegal immigrants and the importance of controlling illegal immigrant-associated violence.

Mr. Mark Batton, St. George resident, spoke about his family experiences pertaining to illegal immigration.

Mr. James Cortez, St. George resident, noted his experiences with e-verify and illegal immigrants.

Mr. Don Graves, St. George resident, spoke about e-verify and the statistics involved with the presentation today.

Mr. Paul Neison, Washington City resident, spoke about his experiences being an immigrant for Holland.

Mr. Greg Allred, Citizens Council on Illegal Immigration, thanked the Committee for coming to the St. George area. He commented on his experiences with illegal immigration in the business community.

Ms. Deneka Suberville commented on her experiences with fees involved with becoming a legal immigrant.

Ms. Betty Hacket, St. George resident, spoke about her experiences in California and unfair tax circumstances with illegal immigrants.

Ms. Yoma Diza, St. George resident, spoke about the importance of diversity and the need for peace and tolerance in the illegal immigration debate.

Mr. Benjamin Nichol, Citizens Council on Illegal Immigration, noted his efforts with illegal immigration in Utah.

8. Committee Business

Chair Dee noted that the Committee's next meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 3 at the State Capitol Complex.

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Sen. Hickman moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Jenkins adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.